

STATEMENT OF MICHAEL SOUKUP, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, NATURAL RESOURCE STEWARDSHIP AND SCIENCE, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR, BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL PARKS OF THE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES, UNITED STATES SENATE, CONCERNING S. 336, TO DIRECT THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR TO CARRY OUT A STUDY OF THE FEASIBILITY OF DESIGNATING THE CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH CHESAPEAKE NATIONAL HISTORIC WATERTRAIL AS A NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAIL.

April 28, 2005

Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to present the views of the Department of the Interior on S. 336, a bill to amend the National Trails System Act to direct the Secretary to study the feasibility of designating the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Watertrail as a National Historic Trail. The Department supports S. 366.

While the Department supports the authorization of this study, we also believe that any funding requested should be directed toward completing previously authorized studies. Currently, 30 studies are in progress, and we hope to complete and transmit 15 to Congress by the end of 2005.

As we approach the 400th anniversary of the Jamestown Settlement and the anniversary in 2007 of the beginning of Captain John Smith's explorations, the examination of this study is most timely. The proposed trail would follow a series of routes extending approximately 3,000 miles along the Chesapeake Bay and the tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay in the States of Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware and the District of Columbia that trace Captain John Smith's voyages charting the land and waterways of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

S. 336 would require the study to be conducted in consultation with Federal, State, regional, and local agencies and representatives of the private sector, including entities responsible for administering the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, coordinated by the National Park Service, and the Chesapeake Bay Program, coordinated by the Environmental Protection Agency.

Captain John Smith explored the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries in a series of voyages and travels from 1607 through 1609, while executing his company's directives to search for a "northwest passage" to the Pacific Ocean. Smith's two major voyages occurred in the summer of 1608, each leaving from Jamestown, Virginia. Between the two voyages, Smith and a small crew traversed the entire length of the Chesapeake Bay, explored the shoreline of the lower half of the Eastern Shore, and ventured into the major tributaries along the western shore of the Bay. Smith had extensive interactions with Native Americans and recorded significant information about these peoples and the general Chesapeake environment in his book published in 1612. He also made one of the first, and most detailed maps of the Chesapeake Bay.

Four hundred years later, the Chesapeake Bay's basic geography remains relatively similar to Smith's time, but much else has changed. More than 16 million people live in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, with the densest concentrations at locations adjacent to where Smith traveled (Washington, DC, Baltimore, MD and the greater Norfolk/Hampton Roads area in VA). Human

uses of the Bay region have caused significant impacts on the Chesapeake environment and the Bay itself.

Today, the Chesapeake Bay is the focus of a conservation and restoration effort led by the Chesapeake Bay Program, authorized under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act. The Chesapeake Bay Program, a partnership effort of the states of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia, the District of Columbia, the Chesapeake Bay Commission, and the Federal government (represented by the Environmental Protection Agency) coordinates a multi-faceted effort to improve Chesapeake water quality and restore habitat for aquatic species.

As one part of the effort to restore the Chesapeake Bay, the National Park Service coordinates the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, authorized by the Chesapeake Bay Initiative Act of 1998. This partnership system of 147 designated Chesapeake Bay Gateways serves to connect the American public with the resources and themes of the nationally significant Chesapeake Bay. These designated Gateways include more than 20 water trails spanning more than 1,500 miles of Bay shoreline and tributaries, including a number of the same routes traveled by Captain John Smith. Through its coordination of the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, the National Park Service is also authorized to provide technical and financial assistance to Gateways for enhancing interpretation, improving public access, and stimulating citizen involvement in conservation and restoration efforts.

Through the Department's existing authority under the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network, we could establish a Captain John Smith Chesapeake Water Trail that would follow the routes of Captain Smith's travels and would be an effective means of further engaging the American public with the vital role of Smith and the overwhelming importance of the Chesapeake Bay. Currently, there are 22 water trails across four states included within the Chesapeake Bay Gateways Network. However, to be designated as a national historic trail under the National Trails Act, an amendment to the Act would be required. Congress normally only considers such a designation after the completion of a study of the proposed trail, which S. 336 would authorize. The study would allow a complete examination of the proposed trail to determine if it meets the criteria for designation as part of the National Trails System. The study is estimated to cost approximately \$250,000.

This concludes my prepared testimony, Mr. Chairman. I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the committee might have.